



education
Department of Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Joint communiqué on the implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework

The main purpose of this communiqué is to inform the South African higher education community of the steps being taken to prepare the higher education system for the implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF).

Policy and Legislative Changes

The Higher Education Qualifications Framework was gazetted in October 2007. The promulgation of this policy constitutes an important element in the process of bringing about policy and legislative changes informed by the review of the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The proposed legislative changes affecting higher education are contained in the National Qualifications Framework Bill and the Higher Education Act Amendment Bill. In terms of the Joint Policy Statement on the NQF, the HEQF and the above Bills, the function of standards setting for higher education qualifications is to become a responsibility of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) as the Quality and Qualifications Council for Higher Education. The finalisation of this legislation forms part of the legislative agenda of Parliament for 2008.

Towards a phased implementation process of the HEQF

The revision to the NQF architecture has significant implications for all stakeholders involved: the Department of Education (DoE), CHE and its permanent quality committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and higher education institutions (HEIs), both public and private.

In particular, the implementation of the HEQF will result in a number of important changes in purposes and characteristics of qualifications such as credit values, levels, nomenclature and designation of many qualifications. Given the nature of educative processes in higher education, it is clear that these changes cannot be introduced overnight. Conscious of this, the DoE, CHE and SAQA have been working together to develop a phased approach to the implementation of the HEQF.

As explained at the workshops held with the sector in March 2008, despite the HEQF coming to effect on 1 January 2009, there will be no immediate or significant impact on institutions. The only change that will occur in 2009 is the admission of students into higher education with the National Senior Certificate.

In this regard, HEIs will continue offering their existing programmes and qualifications as approved by the Department of Education, accredited by the HEQC of the Council on Higher Education and registered on the NQF by SAQA.

Institutions will note from the HEQF that there will be a period of transition during which existing qualifications would be phased out. The Minister of Education will, after consultation with the sector, inform institutions of the date of full compliance by notice in the Government Gazette.

Roles and responsibilities

In terms of the HEQF and the anticipated legislative amendments, the following will apply:

- DoE will retain responsibility for PQM-related decisions for public HEIs as well as for the registration of private HE providers.
- CHE via the HEQC will retain the responsibility for programme accreditation.
- CHE will assume the responsibility for standards generation and standards setting for qualifications in higher education.
- SAQA will be responsible for the registration of HE qualifications and such other functions which are assigned to it in the NQF Bill.

Transitional Structures

The DoE, CHE and SAQA will set up an Interim Joint Committee at which the various aspects of PQM approval (DoE), standards generation and setting for qualifications (CHE), and programme accreditation (CHE via HEQC), and registration of HE qualifications (SAQA), can be dealt with simultaneously for a specified period, after which the IJC will fall away and the respective parties will assume their various responsibilities as set out in legislation and accompanying regulations and policies

The IJC will exist until the end of 2009 with the option of renewing its operational life further by mutual agreement amongst the above parties. Its detailed brief, constitution and composition will be developed by the three parties such that the four main functions outlined above, are carried out in a responsible and accountable manner.

Institutions will be advised as to the date of commencement of the work of the IJC, its membership and the processes and framework to submit applications for the accreditation of programmes during the transitional period.

Standard Setting and Registration of Qualifications during the Transitional Period

During the transitional period, while the CHE is developing the revised framework for the generation and setting of standards for qualifications in higher education, SAQA has agreed not to proceed with the generation and setting of standards in higher education. Furthermore, it is likely that the CHE will not have completed the development of HEQF aligned approaches to standards generation and setting before the second half of 2009. Therefore, SAQA has agreed to roll over all interim registered HE qualifications for another 3 years.

Further Information

This communiqué is the first of a series which will be sent to institutions by DOE, CHE and SAQA jointly or separately, depending on the locus of responsibility for the issues that require attention.



Dr Cheryl de la Rey
Chief Executive Officer (CHE)

PP 

Dr Molapo Qhobela
Deputy Director-General (DoE)

PP 

Mr Samuel Isaacs
Executive Officer (SAQA)